

## Chapter 6

# Strengths and Weaknesses Ladders - Explanation of the model for therapists

The ladder presents a picture of a child's strengths and weaknesses and provides a tool to help children who may have assessed their "flaws" as an indicator of their value. Some children who can't read or write as well as others in their class can feel "stupid". This exercise encourages children to assess all possible areas of strength and to document this "wealth" on a ladder. Common points of comparison (e.g. how well I can read, write, count), are illustrated but then set against the background of other important values (e.g. how well I can play soccer / help dad, etc.). The ladders can be used with the terms provided (e.g. hearing, seeing, making friends), with small pictures and symbols for children who are not yet able to read. More options can be found on the supplementary sheets.

### Instructions:

Each ladder represents a skill. Ask the child to put a cross on the appropriate rung of the ladder - according to their own assessment. The higher the cross on the ladder, the higher the estimation of skill. Crosses low on the ladder indicate a weakness. To begin, the therapist can demonstrate by assessing their own skills in various areas - in comparison with other adults. It is also important to demonstrate talking about weaknesses. The therapist can correct or challenge the self-assessment, or simply write down their own assessment of the child's skill level.

It is important to not only include areas that can be changed, but also aspects of the person that may remain rather stable. Discussing how to improve in some skills (e.g. reading) and 'climb the ladder' is helpful, but we also need acceptance of the fact that we don't have talents in all areas. In my experience (P. Graaf), the more strengths the child can put on the ladder, the sooner they can accept their deficits. External sources (e.g. test scores or IQ test results) can be used to provide evidence for strengths or to elicit strengths in contrast to weaknesses, (good logical thinking can be contrasted with weaknesses in memory or reading).

After the strength profile has been created, role-plays can be used to manage internal and external triggers, e.g. how to respond to insults by remembering strengths internally or by challenging the person directly (e.g. "Nobody is perfect, besides I can do other things well").

## My strengths and weaknesses

Every ladder represents a skill or talent. We have a page with pictures below each ladder, or you can find symbols for your skills and draw or paste them underneath. There are more options on the extra sheet. Put a cross on the ladder to show how good you are in that area, the higher up the ladder, the stronger you are in that skill. Crosses on a low rung of the ladder show where you have a weakness.

